

PUBLIC OUTREACH AND CONSULTATION FOR FOREST CUTTING PLANS POLICY

POLICY: This policy is intended to provide guidance on Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) internal review, public notice of and comment on forest management plan implementation timber harvesting (forest cutting) projects.

APPLICABILITY: This policy applies to DCR State Forests, Parks, and Reservations vegetation management projects.

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PROCEDURES:

I. Responsibility:

1. The Department of Conservation and Recreation, acting through its Bureau of Forestry, is responsible for the conservation, health, and management of forest vegetation within DCR State Forests, Parks and Reservation system lands.
2. The Bureau of Forestry endeavors to follow the Forest Stewardship Standards for the Northeast Region (USA) 2/10/05 (Appendix 1), as revised; statewide forestry guidelines in coordination with the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife; and Forest Resource and Natural Resource Management Plans pursuant to MGL Ch. 21, § 2F; and is responsible for meeting the standards of the Massachusetts Forest Cutting Practices Act (Appendix 2) and other requirements of the law such as the Wetlands Protection Act and Endangered Species Act.

II. Public Notice of Proposed Timber Harvesting Summaries:

1. Management Foresters will prepare proposed Timber Harvesting Summaries (Appendix 3) after consultation, coordination and approval from the responsible Regional Director or their designee, Park Supervisors and State Lands Management Program Supervisor.
2. The proposed Timber Harvesting Summaries will include: the municipality where the project is located; facility name; project's Forest Management district; Management Forester contact information (telephone number, e-mail address, and mailing address); project name; project location description; forest stand description; proposed preliminary silvicultural treatment; aesthetic, recreation, and environmental conditions and considerations such as forest reserves, high conservation value forest; and designated scenic by-ways; topographic map of the area with the area of the proposed work marked, and any other basic identifying information that the Bureau finds appropriate.
3. The proposed Timber Harvesting Summaries will be completed by June 30th and December 30th yearly. Interim proposed timber harvesting summaries plans may be completed at any time on an emergency basis. Examples of emergency situations are high mortality due to forest insects and diseases, blowdown, fire, snow and ice damage, rare species habitat needs, and treatment of invasive species infestation.
4. Proposed Timber Harvesting Summaries will be made publicly available by posting on the Bureau of Forestry's web page: (<http://www.mass.gov/dcr/stewardship/forestry/manage/ProposedForestProductsSales.htm>) and in hard copy at the DCR Boston, Regional and Park Administrative Offices (site of proposed harvesting project).
5. A table listing a summary of all projects under consideration will also be posted on the Bureau of Forestry web page including a link to each proposed Timber Harvesting Summary.
6. All proposed harvest project sites will be posted with a sign that informs the public of a proposed harvesting project and Management Forester contact information.
7. Public meetings will be held on the third Thursday of January and July at each Regional Administrative Office (Amherst, Carlisle, Carver, Pittsfield and the Clinton Field Office). Management Foresters will be available from 3:00 pm until 5:00 pm and from 6:00 pm until 8:00 pm to present to the public and answer questions on the newly posted proposed Timber Harvesting Summaries.

III. Addressing of Public Comments:

1. During the proposed Timber Harvesting Summaries preparation process, Regional Directors or their designee, Park Supervisors, and Management Foresters will assess and identify projects of high public sensitivity involving natural resources and recreational activities and use such as forest reserves (awkward), high conservation value forests, intensively used areas and special and important public, geological or historic places. Potential high public sensitivity issues will be identified in the Timber Harvesting Summary.
2. As part of the planning process, twice each year (on or about July 1 and January 1), the Department will post on its website the table listing all proposed harvesting projects, proposed harvesting summaries under consideration, and Management Forester contact information for the purpose of soliciting public comments.
3. Public comments will be accepted for 45 days after the posting of the proposed Timber Harvesting Summaries.
4. For all projects, after consideration of all public comments received, the Bureau of Forestry will:
 - a. Address public concerns through a prepared DCR written response, which will be coordinated and in consultation with qualified resource specialists, Regional Director or their designee, Park Supervisor, State Lands Management Program Supervisor and Chief of the Bureau of Forest Fire Control and Forestry and post the responses at the Timber Harvest Summary web page.
 - b. Projects that have high public sensitivity will have additional public involvement measures designed to address public concerns. The following are measures that may be useful to address concerns:
 - Development of fact sheets
 - Preparation of news releases
 - Public meetings
 - Field trips
 - Additional data collection
 - Consultation with qualified specialists

IV. Timber Harvesting Project Design:

A. Silvicultural Prescription

After public concerns have been addressed and completed, a detailed Silvicultural Prescription will be prepared according to the Massachusetts Forest Cutting Practices

Act, Endangered Species Act, Wetlands Protection Act; Bureau of Forestry policy, direction, and guidelines; and applicable planning documents.

1. The Management Forester will prepare a final comprehensive silvicultural prescription (Appendix 6) that includes:
 - a. Current forest condition description
 - b. Short and long-term desired conditions
 - c. Silvicultural treatment
 - d. Rare and invasive species considerations
 - e. Wildlife considerations
 - f. Aquatic, riparian, and vernal pool considerations
 - g. Aesthetic and recreation considerations
 - h. Harvest considerations
 - i. Sale layout design
 - j. Forest marking instructions

The Silvicultural Prescription will be made available for public review at the projects respective Regional or Field Office and upon request through public records requests through DCR legal staff at the DCR Boston Office.

B. Forest Cutting Plan Preparation:

1. The Management Forester will prepare a Forest Cutting Plan (Appendix 7) according to Forest Cutting Practices Act regulations. Qualified specialists such as Archeologists, Hydrologists, Biologists, Ecologists, and staff from the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program will be consulted as needed.
2. Cutting Plans as required will be submitted to the Bureau of Forestry, Service Forestry Program for approval.

The Forest Cutting Plan will be made available for public review at the project's respective Regional or Field Office, respective project locations city or town conservation commission and upon request through public records requests through DCR legal staff at the DCR Boston Office.

V. Project Implementation:

Upon completion of the process set forth above, the project will proceed.